

Acute Hepatitis B

❑ WHAT IS IT?

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes infection of the liver.

❑ SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Symptoms usually begin 6 weeks to 6 months after exposure to the virus (average 2 months). The duration of illness varies; most people recover within 3 weeks.
- ✓ In adults, early symptoms can include nausea (upset stomach), loss of appetite, vomiting, fatigue, and abdominal cramps (stomach or side pain).
- ✓ Dark yellow or brown urine, pale or white-colored stools (bowel movements), and jaundice (yellow eyes or skin) may also be present.
- ✓ Persons can have all or only a few of the above signs and symptoms.
- ✓ **Nearly all infants and children and 50% of adults with a new infection have no symptoms whatsoever.**
- ✓ Over 90% of infants, 50% of children, and 5% of adults with acute hepatitis B will develop chronic or long-term infection.
- ✓ Chronic hepatitis B may lead to liver disease including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

❑ HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- ✓ The virus lives in the liver and is present in the blood and certain body fluids.
- ✓ Spread occurs through contact with virus-containing blood and body fluids, such as sharing of injection drug equipment, sexual contact (homosexual and heterosexual), during childbirth, household contact with a person who has hepatitis B, and sharing of personal hygiene items (such as nail clippers, razors, toothbrushes).

- ✓ **The amount of virus is highest in blood and serous fluid** (yellowish or clear fluid that drains from cuts/sores) but is also present in smaller amounts in semen, vaginal fluids, and menstrual blood.
- ✓ Although small amounts of virus can be found in saliva, saliva is not likely to spread hepatitis B, *unless saliva from an infected person gets into a cut or sore, for example, following a bite.*
- ✓ Hepatitis B is **not** spread by kissing or sneezing.

❑ DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- ✓ Hepatitis B is diagnosed with blood tests.
- ✓ There is no medicine or treatment for acute hepatitis B.
- ✓ Rest, a low fat diet, and plenty of fluids are recommended. Avoid drugs and alcohol during any acute (new) illness.

❑ PREVENTION

- ✓ If you use injection drugs, do not share needles, drugs, mixing solution, tourniquets, or works.
- ✓ Practice safe sex: use condoms for any sexual activity, including oral, anal, and vaginal sex.
- ✓ Do not share personal hygiene items, such as razors, nail clippers or files, toothbrushes, or washcloths.
- ✓ Cover all cuts and open sores with a bandage.
- ✓ Hepatitis B vaccine provides protection against hepatitis B for many years. The vaccination series consists of 3 doses given over 6 months.

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❑ WHO SHOULD GET HEPATITIS B VACCINE?

- ✓ All babies and children 19 years of age or younger.
- ✓ Gay and bisexual men.
- ✓ Anyone with more than one sex partner in a 6 month period.
- ✓ Illicit drug users (injection and non-injection).
- ✓ International travelers to areas where hepatitis B is common (includes all areas of the world except Canada, Western Europe & Scandinavia, New Zealand & Australia)
- ✓ Health care and public safety workers with exposure to blood in the workplace.
- ✓ Persons with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis C.
- ✓ Household contacts and sexual partners of persons with hepatitis B.
- ✓ Persons born in countries with high rates of hepatitis B and their family members.
- ✓ Persons with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophiliacs.
- ✓ Clients in institutions for the developmentally disabled.
- ✓ Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders.
- ✓ Patients receiving chronic kidney dialysis (hemodialysis).
- ✓ Anyone else who wants protection against hepatitis B.

❑ WHAT IS HEPATITIS B IMMUNE GLOBULIN?

- ✓ Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) is a blood plasma product that can prevent hepatitis B if given within 14 days of an exposure to an infected individual.
- ✓ HBIG is effective 85 - 90% of the time and protects against hepatitis B for about 3 months.
- ✓ HBIG is necessary if the exposed person has not been vaccinated against hepatitis B and has never had a hepatitis B infection.
- ✓ HBIG is given in combination with the 3 dose hepatitis B vaccine series after exposure to the blood or sexual body fluids of a person with hepatitis B.
- ✓ HBIG and hepatitis B vaccine may be recommended for you if you have had sexual contact or a blood exposure from someone who has hepatitis B.

**Report all King County cases to
Public Health by calling (206) 296-4774.**

Available in alternate formats.